

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 01063 190151Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 180908Z APR 78
FM USLO PEKING
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 454
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL NAHA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1063

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR EFIS JA CH

SUBJ: CHINESE FISHING BOATS OFF SENKAKUS

1. SUMMARY. JAPANESE EMBASSY OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT DEFINITIVE PRC LINE ON SENKAKUS INCIDENT WAS PROVIDED BY VICE PREMIER KENG PIAO IN APRIL 15 MEETING WITH HIDEO DEN. THEY DO NOT EXPECT THE PRC TO KEEP THE ISSUE ALIVE AND REMAIN PERPLEXED AS TO THE CHINESE MOTIVATION IN PRECIPITATING THIS MINOR CRISIS. WE WOULD SUSPECT THAT THE PRC MISCALCULATED THE JAPANESE REACTION TO THIS MOVE AND KENG'S STATEMENT REPRESENTS AN EFFORT TO RECAPTURE LOST GROUND. END SUMMARY.

2. JAPANESE POLITICAL COUNSELOR TOLD USLO OFFICER APRIL 18 THAT FOUR EMBASSY STAFF MEMBERS ATTENDING FAREWELL BANQUET FOR UNITED SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADER HIDEO DEN HAD IN TALKS WITH DIFFERENCE OFFICIALS ALL BEEN GIVEN LINE ON SENKAKU
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INCIDENT IDENTICAL TO THAT
VOICED BY VICE PREMIER KENG PAIO APRIL 15: "THE PRC WOULD INVESTIGATE THE INCIDENT WHICH HAD NOT BEEN CREATED DELIBERATELY OR SYSTEMATICALLY." POLCOUNS SAID THAT HE DOUBTED WHETHER PRC WOULD EVER PASS ON RESULTS OF AN INVESTIGATION (IF THERE WAS ONE). ALTHOUGH AS OF MORNING OF APRIL 18 THERE WERE STILL

TWO BOATS WITHIN JAPANESE WATERS, HE THOUGHT
THE PRC WAS NOT INTERESTED IN KEEPING THE ISSUE ON
PAGE ONE.

3. POLCOUNS SAID THAT WHEN PRESSED INFORMALLY FOR
EXPLANATION FOR INCIDENT, PRC MFA OFFICIAL HAD TOLD
HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME CHINESE
FISHING BOATS HAD BEEN IN SENKAKUS AREA; THEY
TRADITIONALLY FOLLOWED MIGRATION SOUTHWARD OF "RUBBER
FISH" (A SMALL UNAPPETIZING FISH FOUND IN LARGE
QUANTITIES IN EAST CHINA SEA, ACCORDING TO POLCOUNS)
PAST RYKUYUS FINALLY ENDING ANNUAL HARVEST BEFORE
ENTERING TAIWANESE WATERS. MFA OFFICIAL SAID THAT
THESE WERE SMALL BOATS WITHOUT SOPHISTICATED DISTANCE
MEASURING EQUIPMENT ABOARD. PERHAPS THEY DID NOT
REALIZE THEY WERE INSIDE JAPANESE LIMITS. IT MIGHT
ALSO HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE, HE ADDED, THAT THEY HAD
NEVER RECEIVED WORD ABOUT THE EXTENSION OF JAPANESE
FISHING LIMITS TO TWELVE MILES.

4. POLCOUNS RESPONDED THAT HE HAD HIMSELF DELIVERED
NOTIFICATION TO THE MFA OF THE TWELVE MILE EXTENSION
AND HAD BEEN ASSURED THAT "THE AUTHORITIES CONCERNED"
WOULD BE NOTIFIED. HE TOLD USLO OFFICER THAT HE
FOUND IT INTERESTING THAT THE MFA WOULD TAKE A LINE
THAT IN PRINCIPLE RECOGNIZED JAPANESE SOVEREIGNTY
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OVER THE ISLANDS.

5. POLCOUNS AND OTHER JAPANESE EMBASSY OFFICERS
ARE GENERALLY PUZZLED AS TO WHAT THE CHINESE
MOTIVATION MIGHT HAVE BEEN FOR PRECIPITATING THIS
MINOR CRISIS. BECAUSE OF THE CLOSE TIMING THEY
TEND TO DOUBT THAT THE PRC REACTED SIMPLY TO THE
RAISING OF THE SNKAKUS QUESTION BY RIGHT WING
LDP MEMBERS. THE EMBASSY'S AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERIES
OFFICER HAS SPECULATED THAT A BUREAUCRATIC SNAFU DUE
TO THE RECENT REORGANIZATION OF CHINESE FISHERIES
ADMINISTRATION MIGHT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE INCI-
DENT. OTHERS CONJECTURE THAT THE CHINESE MISCALCULATED
THE JAPANESE REACTION AND THOUGHT THAT A LITTLE
PRESSURE MIGHT ACTUALLY HASTEN THE CONCLUSION OF THE PFT
AND UNDERLINE PRC CONSTANCY ON THE BASIC TERRITORIAL
ISSUE.

6. COMMENT. IN OUR VIEW THIS INCIDENT WOULD NOT
BE THE ONLY RECENT CHINESE MISCALCULATION IN THEIR
HANDLING OF RELATIONS WITH JAPAN. THEIR APPROACH
TO THE PFT NEGOTIATIONS IN RECENT MONTHS, WHICH

HAS INCLUDED SOME RATHER INSULTING REFERENCES TO
PM FUKUDA, HAS BEEN HEAVY-HANDED AND GENERALLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE,
IF ONE ASSUMES THAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT RAPID CON-
CLUSION OF A TREATY. FINALLY, IT IS REMOTELY
POSSIBLE THAT THE COMMANDER OF THE FISHING FLEET ACTED
MISTAKENLY WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF AUTHORITIES
IN PEKING. IN ANY CASE, KENG PIAO'S STATEMENT TO
HIDEO DEN MUST HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO DEFUSE THE SITUA-
TION.
WOODCOCK

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